

Sufficiency

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[0 : 0 0] So, like just for a few moments this evening to look at the theme of the Bible being sufficient for us. Is it enough for us? You know, do we not need more? We've looked at different themes about the Bible and this is what we're finishing with this evening. Does it tell us enough of what we need to know about God? Does it tell us what we need to know enough to get to heaven? Maybe more importantly for us at a practical level, does it tell me enough to know how to live as a Christian? Does it give me what I need? Is it sufficient for that? Or am I really living just in my own wisdom and the Bible is a closed book?

When did you last open the Bible? Look for God's direction, guidance and revelation of Himself as Neil and the guys were saying. You know, it's God's revelation of Himself.

Are we really just self-help believers living our lives in our own strength and our own wisdom and the Bible is really a closed book for us in many ways? I wonder sometimes, and I wonder about it in my own life as well, but sometimes one thing I notice pastorally sometimes is when people are struggling, people going through difficult times and you give them promises or guidance or advice from the Bible. Their eyes glaze over. If it's personal advice, if it's practical advice, if it's something that they can grab hold of sort of in a practical way, then they're listening. As soon as we quote scripture or talk about the Bible to people, sometimes the eyes glaze over. Yeah, yeah, that's fine. That's what I would expect from a minister, but that doesn't really help me in my day-to-day living because the Bible is not living. It's just a series of thoughts that might or might not be relevant and we don't see it as authoritative and vibrant in our lives. We want to get to the place where we see the Bible as God's word as something big, something important, something central to us. Not in the way that a history book might be or a textbook or a magazine, but in this unique way as being a revelation of a person and not just any person but the person of God. So by way of introduction, can I just remind us that the whole of the Bible is about

Jesus. You know, part of the reason we struggle with the Bible is because I think sometimes we like the Jesus bit. We like the Gospels. We like sometimes the teaching of the pastoral epistles and the New Testament stories. And maybe we struggle with other parts because we think, well, that's not really about Jesus. But it's all about Jesus because Jesus is God and this is a revelation of God. So the ceremonial laws in the Old Testament deuteronyms about Jesus. The Psalms are about Jesus. The Minor Prophets are about Jesus. They're pointing forward. They're telling us something about the coming Messiah. They're telling us about how God works with his people. They're telling us about what we can deal with and what we need to deal with through the lives of the Old Testament people. But they're all pointing towards Jesus and who he is. It's the story of Jesus as our Creator. Jesus is the one that we've abandoned and turned away from. Jesus Christ as God, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, obviously. It's about people. It's about God. And you know, that's come across as well in what has been said tonight. It tells us about ourselves. It's that mirror, that spiritual mirror that the soul and tells us what we are like and what we need. But it's also about Jesus Christ, about God, about our worship of Him, about

His character, His laws. Now we've become very legalistic when we use the word laws. But it's really just a revelation of His will, of His character, of His mind for us. It tells us about our need. And it's this word which is, that is in fleshed in Jesus. You know, in the beginning was the word. The word was with God. The word was God. It's about the word incarnate in Jesus. The word recorded, the living word. So it's what God has given us. Now there's many things that we might wonder why He's given us what He's given us. And why He didn't give us something else? Well that's maybe a question we can ask them when we can get to heaven. But that's His choice. And that's what He's given us.

[4 : 57] And that's His perfect balance. And that's what we need to have from Him. And so we've got this Christ who's at the core of this word, sufficient saviour. And as we looked at this morning, he's our redeemer, our atoning sacrifice. But he's also our example, isn't he? And very simply, I want to mention that in terms of the sufficiency of using the Bible from the example that we read about Jesus and His temptation. I'm not going to go into the deep theological implications of Him meeting with Satan and all the different temptations.

But when we're tempted to think, well it's just about this life and satisfying our own appetites as Jesus was tempted to do. Or if it's about putting God in the dock and testing Him as Jesus was tempted to do. Or if it's about making other things more important than Jesus and ignoring God's way and doing things our own way and finding our own satisfaction making other things idols instead of worshiping God as Jesus was tempted to do. How did Jesus respond? How did God respond? What example are we given with all the theological uniqueness of the temptation of Jesus? I'm not speaking about that per se this evening. But just in the example He gives when He's faced with these huge temptations and difficulties and challenges, what does He say? Does He say, well I think, has God had every right to say that? Well I would rather not. Waiting and I'll have a committee meeting and decide.

Does He know what does He do? And He does this I'm sure not just because He recognizes God's word from the word but because He's being an example for us. He says each time it is written. That's what He says. It's written. In response to the troubles, the temptations, the trials that He has, He points Satan and He reminds Himself of what God wants for Him from His word. It is written. This is where I'm going. And He says to us throughout that, that's where I want you to go. I want you to go to the place where it's written. I've written it down. It's been written through people, through these 66 books, over thousands of years with different offers from different backgrounds. This is what I've given you and this is what I want you to use because it's sufficient. It's written. And He wants us to know that and He wants us to use that in our lives.

I'd put some texts up. That should work hopefully as well. I'll not use it until it's ready. But we have that recognition and deuteronomy and Revelation speaks about it as well. See that you do all I command. Do not add to it or take away from it. And we've got that again repeated at the end of the Bible in Revelation 22. You don't add to the words of the book or take away from them. And it's a good and a basic reality for us that we can't add to what God's given. We can't say, well, I know something more about God than the Bible tells us. We can't say that. Nor can we take a scissors to Scripture and take bits out that we don't like. I remember a story. No, I probably don't remember a story, so I'm not sure if it's a good idea to tell it. But I'm going to try anyway. And if I don't, you can all laugh at Zach because he's much funnier than I am anyway. An old lady was visited by her minister.

And he was giving her a visit and she had some kind of issue difficulty problem. And she was asking his advice. And he said, oh, she gave him her Bible and said, could you give me the answer from the Bible for it? And when he went to open it, it was all shredded and cut up pages missing, bits cut out, everything. It wasn't like Daysprings Bible at all. It wasn't underlined. It was just bits, massive bits were cut out from it. And he said, well, I don't know if I can answer anything from this Bible. It's all wrecked. And she said, well, that's just the bits that you keep telling us to leave out and ignore and not believe anymore because he wasn't a minister like me. He wasn't a minister that believed in the Bible and the relevance of the Bible. And he kept saying, you know, he kept saying, well, that doesn't, you don't need to think about that anymore. You don't need to believe that anymore.

[9 : 41] And so she was cutting out all these things. But we can't do that. We can't add to it. Nor can we take away from it. And we don't, we don't judge it by our own standards and think, well, I'm not sure if that's acceptable. We recognize it as God's word and God's revelation from us. And we see it through the perspective of the cross, recognizing, first of all, what Jesus, who Jesus is and what he's done for us. That's how we, you know, when you struggle with Deuteronomy, maybe, or you struggle with other parts of the Bible, you don't try and sort these things out first to say, well, then I'll come to Jesus and work him out.

You recognize who Jesus is and what he's done. And then you use that as the place from which, the prism through which you look at everything else in scripture. And for us, that is what we have. We have God's word, which is sufficient for all our needs. And as God's words for us, not only does it tell us, as we've seen in the way of salvation, but it's our discipleship channel. And again, that came through in all that, all that folk were saying this evening.

It's our discipleship channel. It's sufficient for us to live our Christian lives and learn about how to follow Jesus. The Great Commission is that we are to become disciples of Jesus.

You'll not become a disciple of Jesus if you don't learn and listen to and channel yourself into his word, because his word reveals his mind and his will and his love and his character.

It's that living word, isn't it? That's what we've stressed a lot. There's this relational aspect to it. So it's not like any other book or anything. I say, you take this book that we have, the Bible, and somehow it's as if we see a person in it, because that's exactly what it is. It's a letter. Far more than that. It's far more than the written word. It's Jesus Christ. As Neil said, he meets with us in his word and we meet with him. And we find in it as we delve into his wisdom, his life, his love, his grace, his light. And that is to be the foundation of our Christian lives, because it's sufficient for what we need. If we're making our Christian life based on anything else, it's sinking sand.

[12 : 31] It's our discipleship challenge. So we have this reality that it's sufficient for our Christian lives. I want to repeat that a little bit more using different verses from the Bible.

It's sufficient for salvation. Let's remember that. And I think this is important for us again today. Peter Wagner, who's a professor or a lecturer at Fuller Theological Seminary, is quoted as saying recently, the simple gospel is no longer adequate without signs and wonders, without drama, without extras. We don't believe that here. We don't believe that the simple gospel is insufficient, is inadequate. We don't believe there needs to be anything else, rather than the gospel of Jesus Christ. It was good enough for Paul in his life, the Christian gospel, as Christ and him crucified and all that goes with it. Batteries are running out in that thing, I think. Can I just ask you to change it? Oh, man, you need good eyesight to read that. But it's sufficient for us to come to Christ. And when we come to Christ, we find that we meet with God and His Spirit. What we've received is not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit of the world is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught as by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with spirit-taught words. So we have Jesus Christ who comes into our lives, who reveals the way of salvation, who gifts us His Holy Spirit, and His Holy Spirit brings to life His Word. So we need Jesus Christ to value His Word and to find it sufficient for us as a person without the Spirit, does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, but considers them foolishness.

So when you're sharing the gospel with someone and they think it's foolishness, it's not that you need signs and wonders to add to it. It's not that you need something dramatic to persuade them, it's that they need the Spirit of God to open up the words of truth and the reality of truth. And that remains the same for you in your Christian life. It's not merely an intellectual pursuit, it's not merely knowing about books and words, it's about relying on God's Spirit and finding then the sufficiency from God in that. That means that we have the Bible in one hand and we have prayer in the other hand, if we can use that illustration. We take the two together, we have the Bible and we have this dependence on the Spirit of God. We're asking God to show us that His Word is sufficient for us and to be guided by it. So it's sufficient in that way to tell people about Jesus, the needs haven't changed. We aren't moving away, you know, and I think as it mentioned how challenging that scripture from 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians was this morning, that people still need to recognise that there's eternal destruction if they're out of Christ. Nothing's changed about that. Eternal destruction is what His Word says, eternal destruction out of Jesus Christ. So it's not kind of, you know, fresh cream and a scone and a cup of coffee and if you like Jesus then that's great, you can discuss it in afternoon tea and take it or leave it because it's a nice additional thing in your life. It's eternal destruction, nothing changes and the message of a dead, crucified and also risen Saviour speaks about the significance and importance of that. But then in an on-going way it's to remind us of how we then in coming to Christ live for Jesus Christ.

Second Peter 1 verse 3, His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. All that you need to live the Christian life is given to us from our knowledge of God through His Word.

We've got all that we need. John 17, 17, Jesus' great prayer for His people. Sanctify them by the truth. Your Word is truth. As you sent me to, I've sent them into the world for them. I sanctify myself that they too may be truly sanctified. You know what?

[17 : 14] It's becoming like Jesus, that's what it is in our lives, living our lives. How do we become like Jesus by the truth? Your Word is truth. How do we become more like Jesus through the Bible, through understanding Jesus Christ as He reveals Himself? It's sufficient for us. It's what He has given us. 2 Corinthians 3, 5. We're not competent in ourselves to claim anything. Our competence, our sufficiency comes from God. So our competence in the Christian life, our excellence, our ability to live comes from knowing God and who He is. I think this is the verse we used originally when we started the series 2 Timothy 3, 15 to 17.

This is the scripture. All scripture is God, breathe useful, and notice the terminology here, teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. So the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good word. All scripture is useful for these things in our lives. These are didactic terms. They're personal terms. It's like teacher pupil terms, disciple master terms. They're personal. They're relational terms. So you're saying, this is the word and my word to you is going to help you. It's going to teach you. It's going to rebuke personally. A book doesn't really rebuke and correct and train in the way that the Bible does because it's a personal revelation of God. It's a counselling manual. A lot of people will go, I've got to watch what I say here, but Americans, a lot of fine Americans in the congregation here. But there's a kind of philosophy, I think sometimes in the American church or has been of the Bible and then counselling. You know, everyone in America's got their personal counsellor. Cross exaggeration, I know. We recognise, and there's a great movement in some of the church in America to focus that counselling, which is an absolutely good thing, around Christ and the scripture. So there's counselling that's not based around the Bible and not Christ centred. Yeah, almost secular in its philosophical foundation. But there's a movement now of which we're using here in the congregation and which will be based, and there'll be a unit based here of counselling that is biblically based Christian counselling.

Not in a kind of nutty way, but in a way that recognises that the Bible is sufficient for our needs. God, the Jesus Christ is the great psychologist, the great psychiatrist, the great psychoanalyst, the great one who knows our mind and heart. And the deepest dysfunctions of our lives can be dealt with by, in a relationship with Jesus Christ. I'm not saying cheaply, I'm not saying easily, but as we allow His light, the light of His word, to delve into the dysfunction of our hearts and the brokenness of our lives through deep-seated, yes, deep-seated biblical counselling, then we will find that it is sufficient for us. The Bible tells us and advises us and gives us principles about our lives, about our relationships, about our sexuality, about our family, about our business, about how we deal with poverty, about how we deal with riches, about community, about ambition, about governing of our lives in every aspect. It tells us, it guides us, it's sufficient for these things. And you know when it says nothing? Well, that's fine. We don't need to know. And if it says nothing specifically, for example, if there's two jobs that you want to go for, the Bible, you're not going to look up the Bible and find which job to take. The wisdom from God, you use prayer, you use common sense, biblical common sense, you learn the advice from others and you make a decision. But on the important moral, ethical, Christian, spiritual dimensions to our lives, the Bible is sufficient for what we need. Absolutely. We're always learning. We're delving into it. It's that supreme, authoritative, sufficient revelation from God for our lives.

What often is the reality for us? I think it's often not that the Bible is sufficient, but rather we don't like what the Bible says, so we close the book. It's that we lack faith to put into practice what Jesus tells us, or we don't believe it. No, I just don't believe that. That's not what my friends say. That's not what society is saying. So, no, I can't accept that anymore. So we have a different standard of authority, society, our friends, maybe ourselves. It's not that the Bible is insufficient for us, but we don't like what it says, or we don't know what it says. We take a certain course of action on its disastrous, but we haven't bothered sometimes to find out what the Bible says. What the Bible guidance says in that, or that we're simply not listening to the Bible. It's a closed book for us. It isn't something that's living and relevant and vibrant in our lives. It doesn't fit.

No, and this is what He's saying, but it doesn't fit for what I want to be or what I want to do. What doesn't it fit? Who are we listening to? Who is it that we know? What is it that we like? Because the Bible deals with the heart issues that are crucial to us and that are often at the very core and are the layers before some of the decisions we take. It's not about the decisions, it's about the motives way back before them. And Jesus Christ and His Spirit is wanting to change us at that level. Sometimes it's not a sufficient issue, it's a sin issue. As we said this morning, a great place to be is, or the great battle we have is to say, your will be done, not mine. Isn't that the great battle for us?

[24 : 33] The reality is we'd rather sometimes say, my will be done, not mine, not yours. And it's not so much a battle or a question of sufficiency, it's a question of will in our lives. And again, especially when it's when we're at a crossroads and we say, this is my way, this is God's way. If my way and God's way are the same sufficiency scripture, no problem. Abidians, no problem. My way is I want to go that way. And Jesus clearly said, no, this is the way to go. Then that's the challenge for us about whether we take his sufficiency. And very, very briefly, the encouragement then is for us to continually, because we know it's sufficient, because it tells us all things, because it's given to us, is taste and see. Embrace the word in your life. Be eyeball to eyeball with the word. Recognize Jesus through it. Make it the foundation of your thinking and your living and your life and your guidance. Even when you don't know he needed guidance, as Niels testimony was, there'll be times when you look at the word, we don't know what it's telling us. But God knows, it's our communication with heaven. So be dependent on the Holy Spirit, because as we read in Corinthians, we need the Spirit of God. It opens up to us. Don't just look at it like a textbook, but come to it prayerfully and come to it in faith and come to it as a broken and lost sinner saved by grace who needs the guidance and the help of God. Be repentant. Be sensitive. Recognize that his resurrection power is what changes our hearts. We can't do it on our own. Sometimes we don't even want to do it on our own. And can I just say as part of this encouragement to taste and see spend time in it. Spend time in his word. Pick it up. Pick it up. Sometimes that's the hardest thing in the world to do. Pick it up. Not just as a ritual once in a while, even once a day, not just on a Sunday, but pick it up. Make it that relation communication with the living God. You know, we have it now. We can have it on our phones now. Just take it occasionally when you're on the bus. Just read it. When you've got 20 minutes, just stop and read it. Doesn't need to be systematic. You don't need to be examining it. You don't need to be using commentaries. Just take it sometimes when you're living and you've got a half hour spare. Just read it. Read somewhere from it. Maybe instead of going to do something else, instead of if there's nothing in your agenda, instead of maybe going to do something else, whatever it might be, just pick up the Bible. Get half an hour, a little bit on your own. Become people who know and who love and who hear God and who listen for what God is saying. Become experts in the word. Do it spontaneously. Do it with a sense of excitement.

Do it expecting God to speak into our lives and speak into our situation. May it become a significant part of our lives because it's God's word revealed to us. God's speaking to us and revealing ourselves to him. And in so doing, dig deep. That's the last text, Hebrews 4 verse 12. It's amazing truth, isn't it? That's the sufficient word. The word of God is alive and active. That's an amazing thing. It's alive and it's active. And this is for the whole, this is for me, we're the whole kind of dealing with our dysfunction and our deepest needs. It's sharper than any double edged sword. It's sharper than any counselling manual, sharper than any advice that pastor or anyone else could give. It penetrates deep dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow, judging thoughts and attitudes.

If we will allow it, if we will open ourselves to it and be sensitive to it, nothing is hidden. Nothing in your life or mine is hidden from God's sight. Everything is laid bare and his word is sufficient for us. So maybe sometimes that will mean tough relationship with him.

It'll mean tears. It'll be exposing deep seated greed sometimes for us and ugliness.

But it's what we need. And his light comes in and cleanses and there's nothing he doesn't forgive and there's nothing he wouldn't heal in our lives and make us whole and make us complete. God knows. It is easy, I know, to close the book. May it be that we keep it open, keep that communication line open at all times, both in the word and in prayer.

[29 : 47] Amen. And it's prayed briefly. Lord God, we ask and pray that you would help us to know that your word is sufficient for us. It gives us all we need to live our Christian life.

It tells us how to be holy because it is your word. But we know it's in many ways miraculous that we take that and we see it as a living word and your spirit will apply it to our hearts and may that be something that excites us and gives us a sense of dignity and a sense of worth and wellbeing and may it be that we trust in your word more and more. May we unite together and that may we help each other around the word may in our mental relationships and our city groups, in our friendships in the church, in our Christian companionships, young people, old people, all of us in together. May we be unashamed to open the word. May we be unashamed to be advised from it. May we know it well enough to give advice from it, not in a sanctimonious or in a kind of cold orthodoxy but with a living and loving passionate concern for the lives and souls of our friends. So Lord bless us and may we not cast aside your word as being irrelevant or outdated or old fashioned or not meeting our needs but may through your spirit we find that it is that living and vibrant double-edged sword and active in our Christian lives. For Jesus' sake, amen.